

Remarks:

The above amendments and these remarks are responsive to the Office action dated September 22, 2004.

Prior to entry of the present amendments, claims 1-51 were pending in this application. Claims 1-4, 14-16, 24, 25, 33, 34 and 50 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) based on Sato (US 6,467,910). Claims 5-13, 17-23, 26-32 and 35-41 are rejected as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the features of the base claim and any intervening claim. Claims 42-49 and 51 are allowed.

In the interest of furthering prosecution of those claims indicated as allowable (or allowable if placed in independent form) by the Examiner, applicants have amended claims 5, 10, 17, 22, 26, 31, 35 and 40 to place such claims in independent form (as suggested by the Examiner). These claims thus are understood to be in allowable form. Furthermore, claims 6-9, 11-13, 18-21, 23, 27-30, 32, 36-39 and 41 depend from the newly independent claims, and thus are understood to be allowable for at least the same reasons as indicated with respect to the newly independent claims.

Regarding the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a), applicants respectfully disagree. In particular, applicants note that the Examiner has indicated that "a cross section is determined relative to a chosen intersecting plane" and asserts that an inclined plane may be chosen to achieve the recited "transverse cross section that is elongate along a longitudinal axis." Applicants thus have amended claims 1, 14, 24, 33 and 50 to make the nature of the transverse cross section more clear. Claims 1, 14, 24 and 33 have been amended to recite "a

transverse cross section taken in a plane generally perpendicular to the light path." Claim 50 has been amended to recite "a light beam having a given transverse cross section taken at a first angle relative to a light path of the light beam" and a modified light beam having "a modified transverse cross section taken at the first angle relative to the light path of the light beam."

As recognized by the Examiner, Sato does not disclose or suggest a light beam with a transverse cross section that is elongate along a longitudinal axis where the cross section is "taken in a plane generally perpendicular to the light path" as recited in claims 1, 14, 24 and 33. Claims 1, 14, 24 and 33 thus should be allowed. Claims 2-4, 15, 16, 25 and 34 depend from claims 1, 14, 24 and 33, and thus should be allowed for at least the same reasons as set forth with respect to those claims.

Regarding claim 50, applicants note that Sato does not disclose or suggest a method which includes modifying a light beam to have a modified transverse cross section that has a reduced width transverse to a longitudinal axis relative to a length along the longitudinal axis. In particular, applicants note that claim 50 now recites that the given transverse cross section and the modified transverse cross section are both taken at the "first angle relative to the light path." Claim 50 thus should be allowed.

Applicants believe that this application is now in condition for allowance, in view of the above amendments and remarks. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowability covering the pending claims.

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If the Examiner has any questions, or if a telephone interview would in any way advance prosecution of the application, please contact the undersigned attorney of record.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to Examiner W. Dowling, Group Art Unit 2851, Assistant Commissioner for Patents, at facsimile number (703) 872-9306 on December 22, 2004.



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